The challenge of planning for ‘local character’ in Marrickville

‘A community’s sense of place can be undermined and existing attractors devalued when… design has little sense of the “local” character, materials or landscape’,

Better Placed: an integrated design policy for the built environment of NSW, 2018, p.23

* Local character is the reflection of the unique social, cultural and physical development of an area.

* ‘Local character’ is synonymous with ‘place’

View of Marrickville and city from the old quarry site Schwebel St, Marrickville

Preserving the materiality of local character: brick, stone, filigree iron, timber and terracotta tiles in an early 20th century bungalow, Ivanhoe St, Marrickville

The origins of local character?

Giovanni Piranesi, *Veduta di Campo Vaccino*, c.1775

Documenting local character before it disappears: Eugene Atget, 'Old Paris', 1900-1905

Getting rid of local character in the interests of efficiency and social control: Baron von Haussman's Parisian boulevards created 1870s

The rise of urban planning in NSW

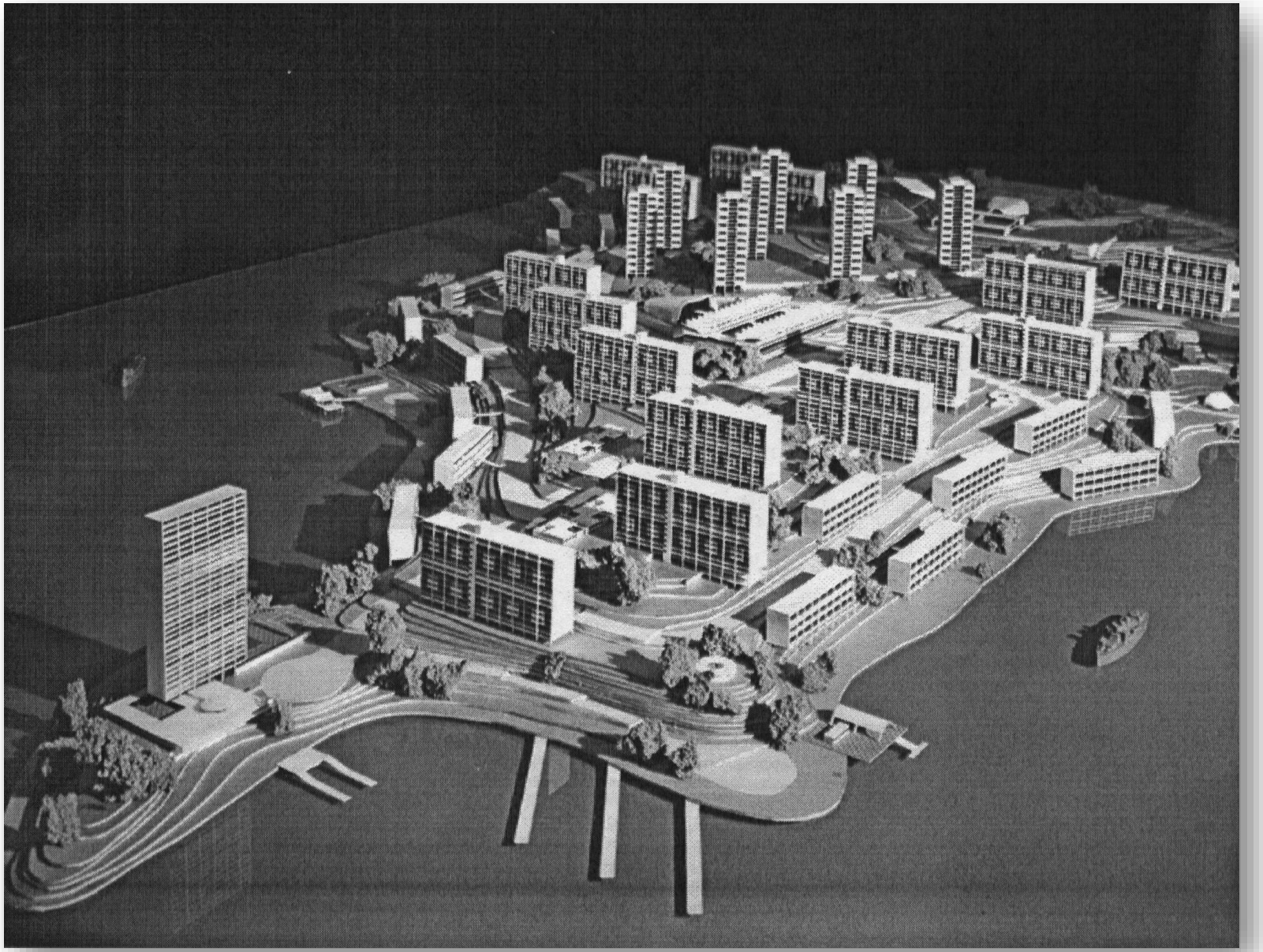
* 1906 Local Government Act
* 1909 Royal Commission into the Improvement of Sydney and its Suburbs
* 1911 Est. of NSW Housing Board
* 1914 Est. of the Town Planning Association of NSW

Dacey Garden Suburb aka Daceyville, Housing Board of NSW, Government architect, 1912.

Master planning, place making and the suburban ideal: Daceyville, c.1915 – serpentine streets, trees, gardens and Arts and Craft-influenced architecture reinforce a uniform Anglo-celtic heritage and history

Master planning, place making and the Modernist urban ideal

McMahons Point scheme, Harry Seidler et al, 1958



* The craving for order and uniformity grows.

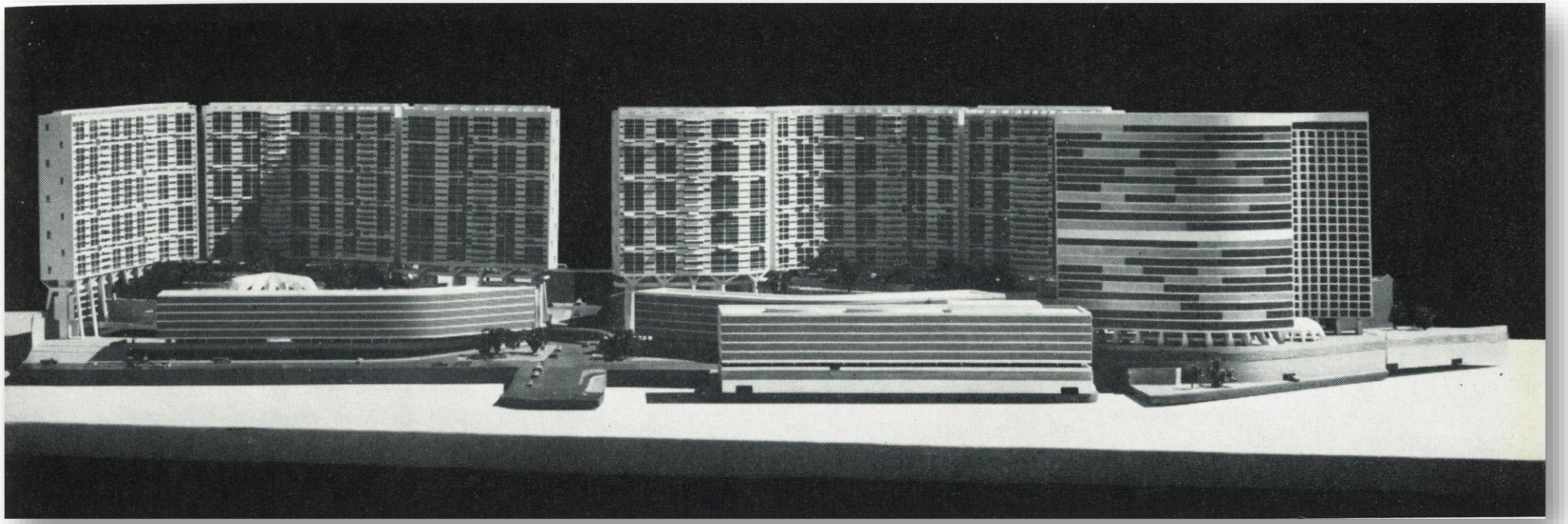
* The master knows best

* Demolishing existing streetscapes allows a place for everything and everything in its place

Harry Seidler and the McMahons Point scheme

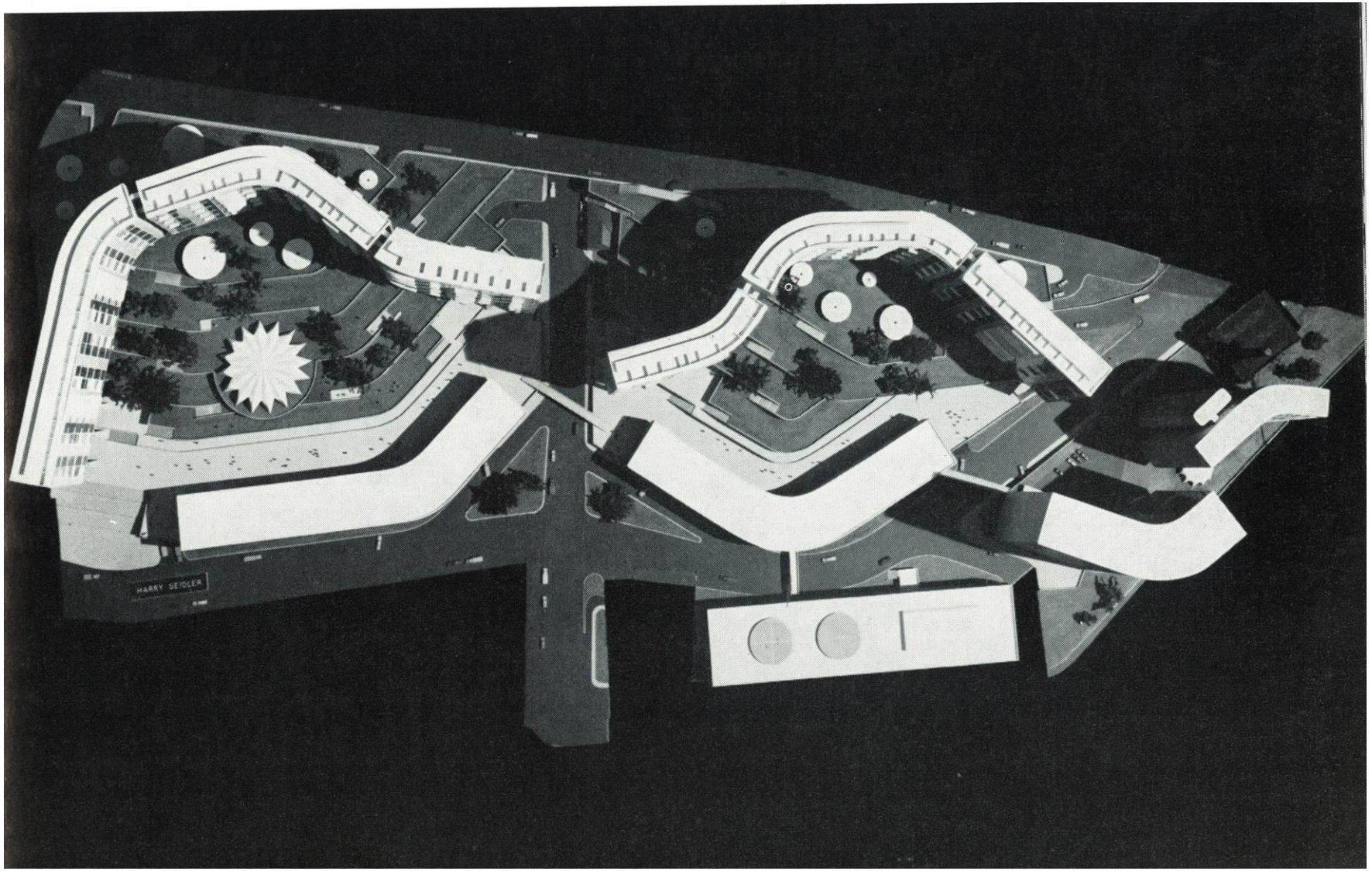
Discarding the ‘old bones’ of the city.

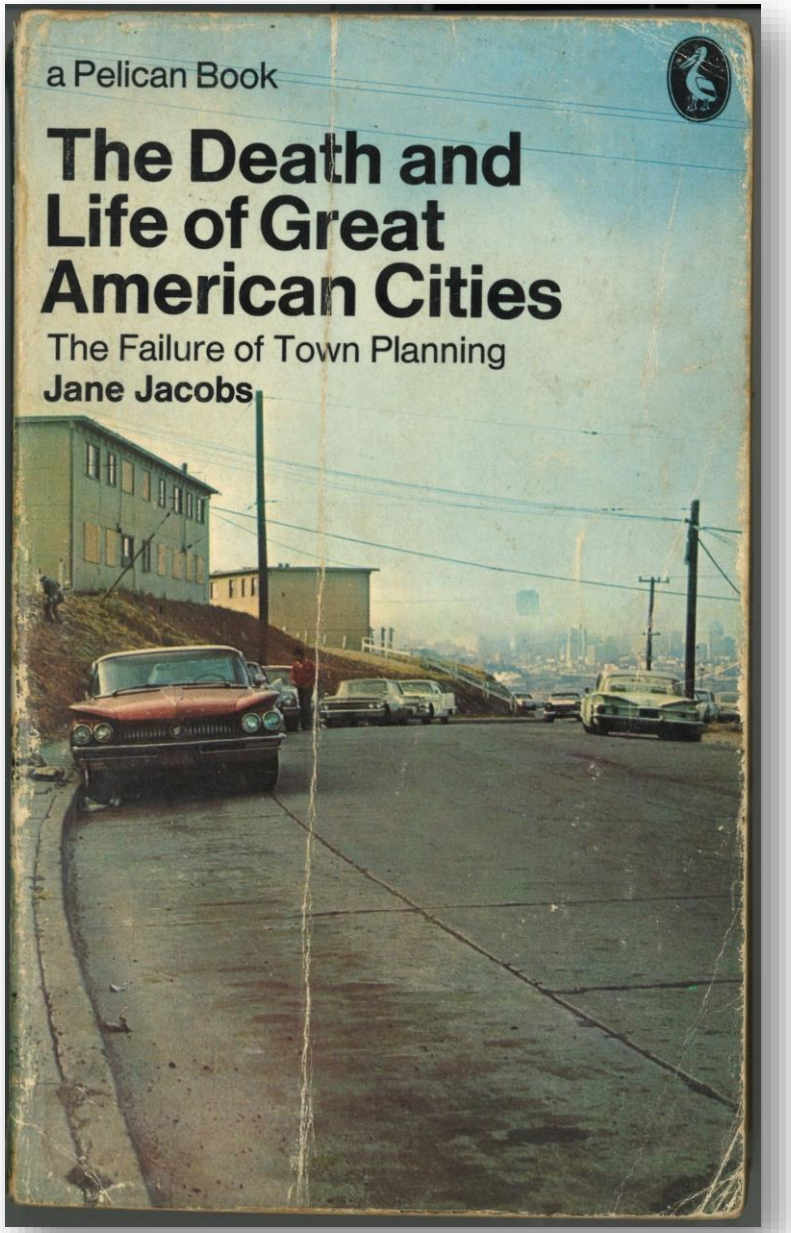
Scheme for redevelopment of the Rocks by Harry Seidler and Associates, 1963



Making space and views where once there was congested streets.

Scheme for the redevelopment of the Rocks, Harry Seidler and Associates, 1963





A challenge to the master planners:

'Cities need old buildings so badly it is probably impossible for vigorous streets and districts to grow without them…Large swatches of construction built at one time are inherently inefficient for sheltering wide ranges of cultural, population, and business diversity'.

Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities: The Failure of Town Planning*, p.200

Master planning for people or the investment market?

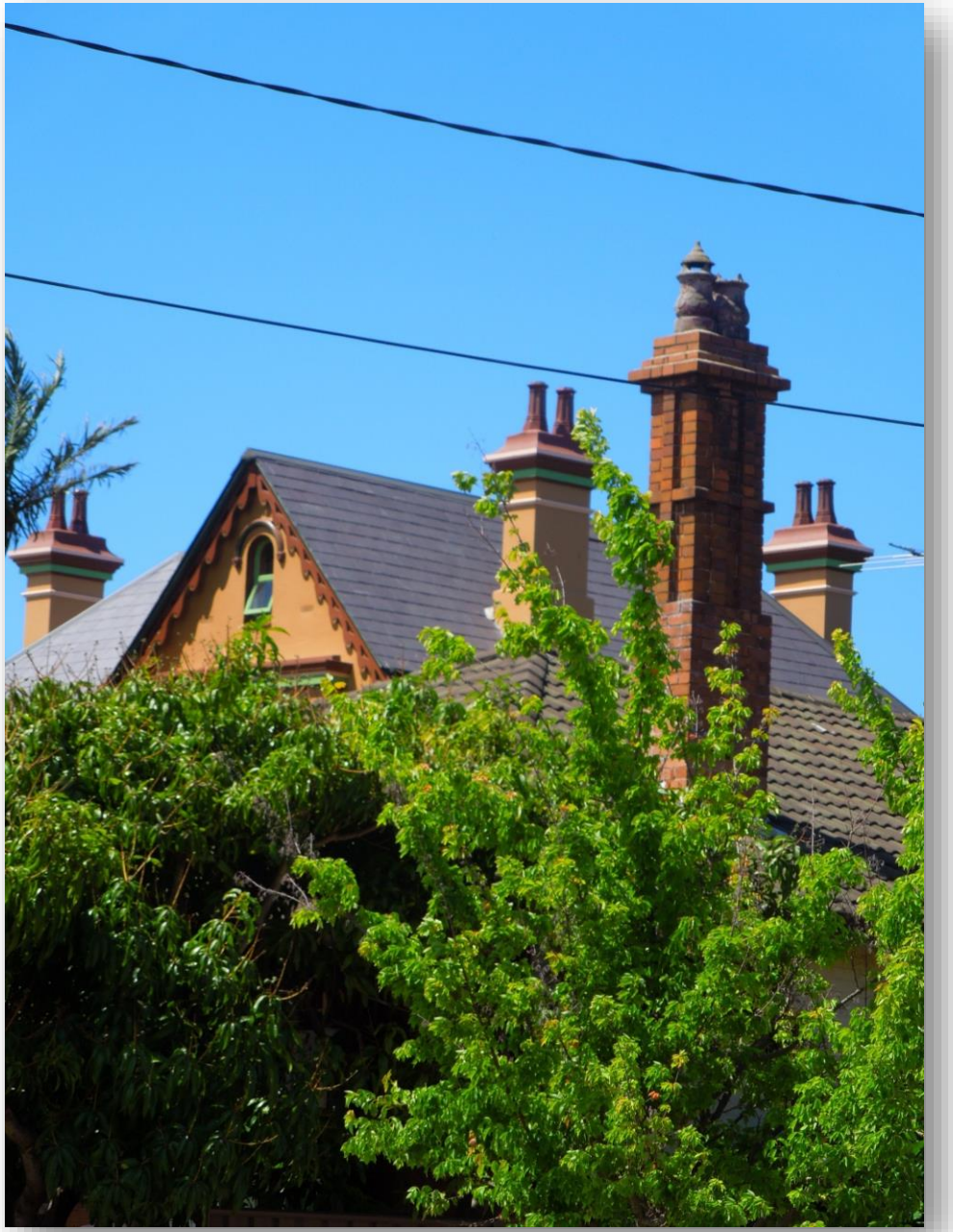
Meriton development, Mascot, 2018

Instant place making

Meriton Retail Precinct, Mascot Central, 2018

Is this local character?

Taste Gallery Restaurant, Meriton Retail Precinct, Mascot Central, 2018



Marrickville's local character

Things that can't be instantly created

1) The glimpse into the past

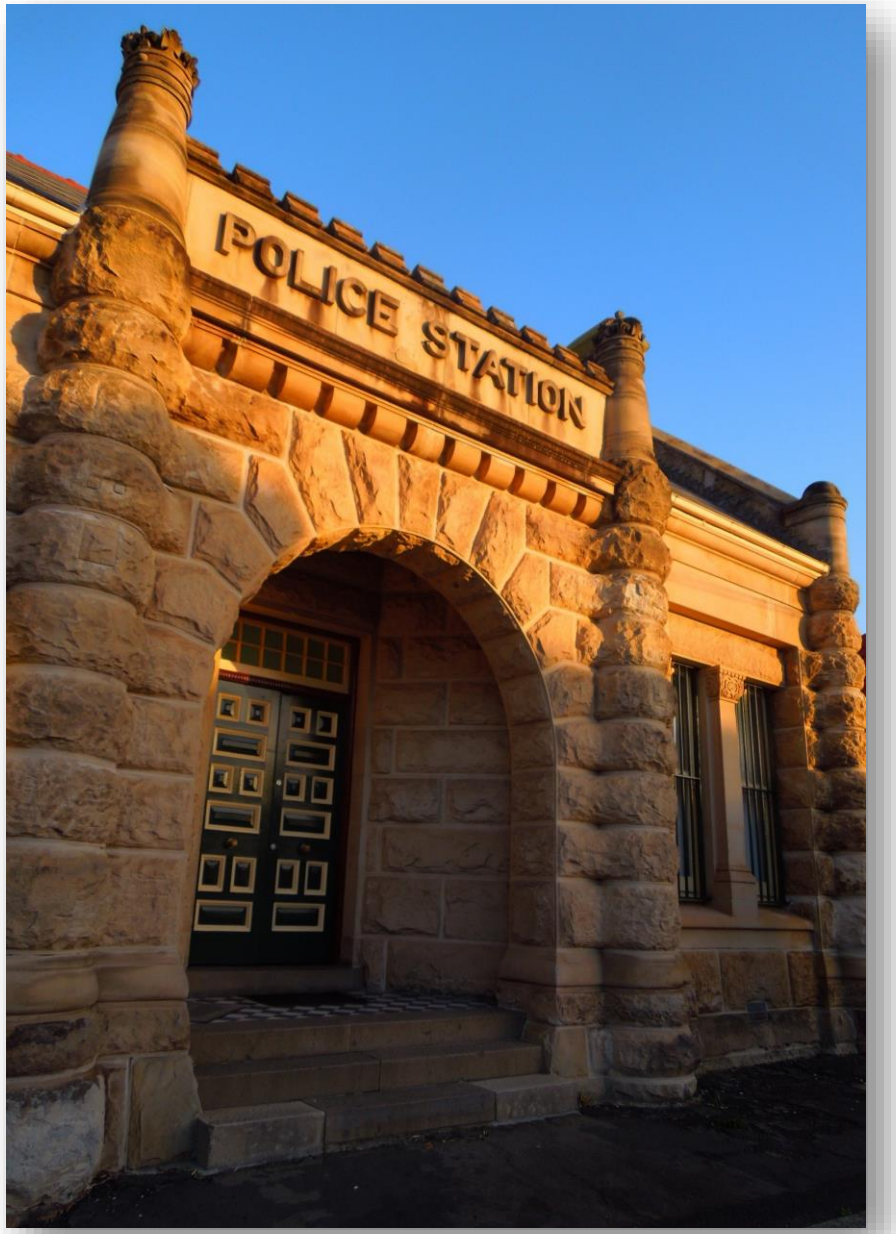
Victorian and Edwardian chimneys in Carey Street, 2017

Marrickville's local character

Things that can't be instantly created

2) Architectural exuberance and the celebration of past skills

1922 shop dwelling façade Marrickville Rd



Marrickville's local character

More architectural exuberance and the celebration of past skills

Old Police Station, Gladstone St

Marrickville's local character

A low rise early 20th century suburb

Arts and Crafts bungalow featuring polychromatic brick, rough cast and leaded oriel window, Schwebel St

Marrickville's local character

Topographic variation and surprising places

Pocket park and sandstone retaining walls, Ruby St

Marrickville's local character

Housing diversity

1960s era walk-up flats and early 20th century bungalows, Warren Rd

Marrickville's local character

New buildings

Revolution apartments on old Returned Services Club site, Illawarra

Marrickville's local character

Industrial heritage

The Rega Products now New Dimensions Building, Carrington Rd, 1937

Marrickville's local character

Industrial heritage

The Rega Products now New Dimensions Building, Carrington Rd, 2018

Marrickville's local character

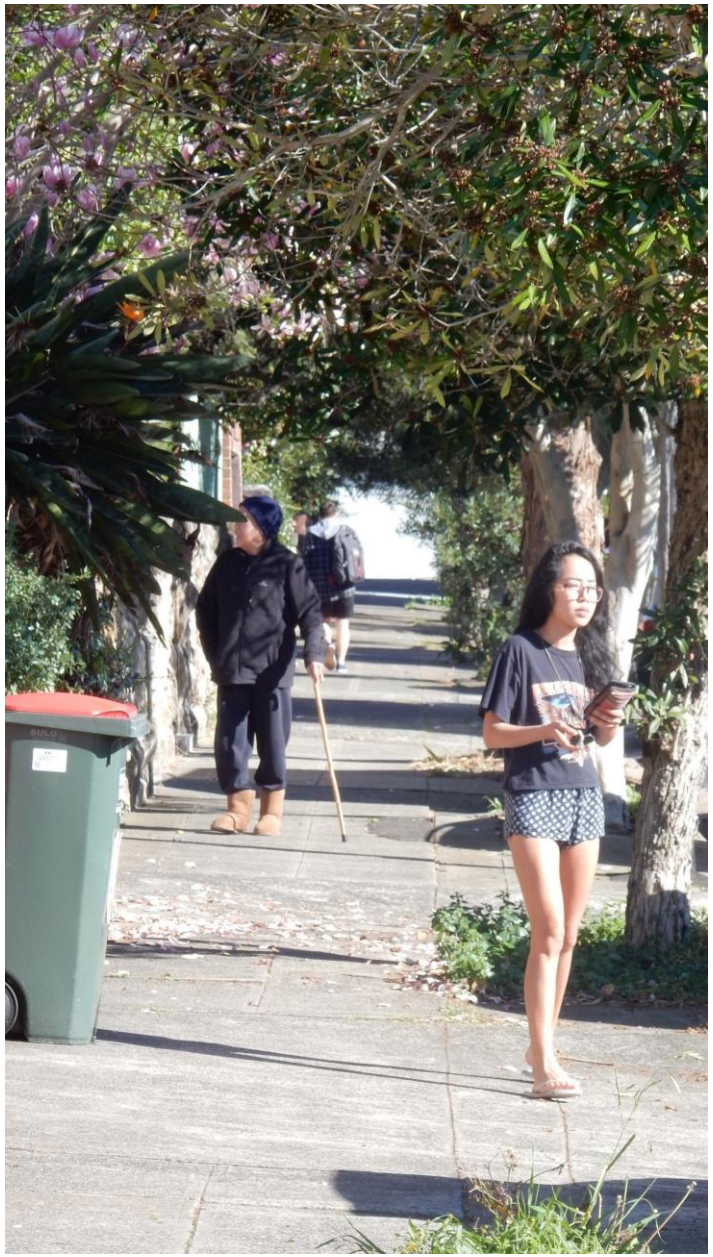
A diversity of building types fosters diversity in the community

Shop dwellings on Illawarra Rd

Marrickville's local character

A diversity of building types fosters diversity in the community

Residents and street plantings on Leofrene Ave



Marrickville's local character

A diversity of building types fosters diversity in the community

Vietnamese fruit market under shop front awning, Illawarra Rd

Marrickville's local character

A diversity of building types fosters diversity in the community

Vietnamese fishmonger, Marrickville Rd

Marrickville's local character

A diversity of building types fosters diversity in the community

Omonia Coffee Lounge entry, Gladstone St

Marrickville's local character

A diversity of building types fosters diversity in the community

Marrickville Pork Roll, Illawarra Rd

Marrickville's local character

A diversity of building types fosters diversity in the community

Elderly resident tending front garden, Meek St. The early 20th century bungalow has been modified with a Corinthian column

Marrickville's local character

A diversity of building types fosters diversity in the community

Chicken run in backyard, Ruby St

Local character as real estate marketing commodity – authentic living

'Just 7km from the CBD, Marrickville is fast becoming one of Sydney's most iconic suburbs – a melting pot of cuisines, creative arts and characters founded on a rich multicultural heritage', Mirvac

The Burrow Café Cnr Illawarra and Grove St

…and then there is the natural landscape – Egrets on the Cooks River